



Campaign Kickoff Remarks

Craig Berkowitch, CEO:

It is wonderful to see so many friends, leaders, partners, and supporters gathered here tonight. A warm welcome to our community rabbis who've joined us tonight and the executives of the JCC, Jewish Family Service, Hillel and Hebrew Free Loan – could you please stand up so we can recognize you.

Collectively, our presence here tonight sends a powerful message: Jewish life in San Antonio matters—and its future is our shared responsibility.

I want to begin by thanking Frost Bank for its generous support of tonight's celebration. For generations, Frost has stood alongside San Antonio's Jewish community, supporting the institutions and people who strengthen our city. We are deeply grateful for that enduring friendship.

Tonight is a celebration—but it must also be a call to action.

The Jewish Federation is sometimes viewed primarily as a fundraising organization. Fundraising is essential to our work, but it does not fully describe who we are.

JFSA is our community's strategist, convener, connector, and guardian of communal priorities. We bring people and organizations together, identify emerging needs, mobilize resources, develop leaders, and strengthen the institutions upon which our community depends.

Simply stated, our new mission is clear and urgent: to strengthen and protect Jewish life in San Antonio.

Everything we do—and every investment we make—must advance that mission.

We pursue that mission through four essential pillars: amplifying joyful Jewish life; Securing the community and fighting antisemitism; Caring for Jews and others in need; and Building meaningful connections to Israel and global Jewry.

This work has never been more urgent.

Our community is undergoing a profound generational shift. For decades, many families viewed supporting Jewish life as an obligation—part of what it meant to be Jewish. As



that generation passes, its philanthropy and sense of collective responsibility are not being replaced at the same level.

At the same time, our needs are growing.

Security costs are rising. Antisemitism is increasing. Jews represent only about 2 percent of the American population, yet recent FBI data show that we are the targets of roughly 68 percent of reported religion-based hate-crimes.

Our agencies are serving people with increasingly complex needs. Seniors and young adults are confronting loneliness and isolation. Many of our seniors have no immediate family in San Antonio; we are their extended family. And too many people feel disconnected—from organized Jewish life, from Israel, from one another, and sometimes from their own Jewish identity.

Those needs are why Federation matters—and why our programs matter.

Through the JCRC, we advocate for our community and confront antisemitism.

Through our partnership with the Secure Community Network, we coordinate professional security, training, threat assessment, and relationships with law enforcement.

The Holocaust Memorial Museum teaches students, educators, healthcare, and law-enforcement professionals about the consequences of hate.

Yom Limmud brings our community together through Jewish learning, while PJ Library, Hillel, and camperships connect young people to identity and belonging.

And the Federation does so much more through programs like Outshine Hate, which fights antisemitism, Bridges of Faith, which connects us to allies across the city, and Voices from Israel which bring a diverse set of voices to San Antonio to keep us informed and inspired about events and issues in our homeland.

Together, these programs strengthen Jewish life at every age and turn our communal priorities into action.

Our congregations, agencies, volunteers, and professionals do extraordinary work. But excellence in separate silos is no longer enough. The challenges before us demand collaboration, coordinated action, and collective impact.



This is why Federation matters.

Almost 25 years ago, Barb and I moved our family to San Antonio not knowing a soul. We arrived as newcomers, but this Jewish community embraced us and gave us something every family needs: a genuine sense of belonging and a place to call home.

That kind of community must be here for the next family that arrives—and for families who have called San Antonio home for generations. Their children and grandchildren deserve to inherit not simply the memory of a strong Jewish community, but a vibrant Jewish community in which they can belong, grow, and lead.

That is our vision: a vibrant, united, welcoming, and resilient Jewish San Antonio.

But revitalization will not happen automatically. We cannot admire the community built by previous generations while assuming someone else will build its future.

There is one responsibility we cannot delegate: building the Jewish future of San Antonio.

A gift to the Annual Campaign is therefore more than a donation. It is an investment in our community's strength, safety, unity, and renewal.

The time for revitalization is now. We must move from concern to commitment, from individual effort to collective action, and from simply preserving what we inherited to boldly building what comes next.

Thank you for being here, for believing in this community, and for joining us in our mission to strengthen and protect Jewish life in San Antonio—today and for generations to come.



Amy Benedikt, MD, Board Chair:

Thank you, Craig.

Tonight, we are talking about bold communities—and bold communities require people willing to invest for the long term.

That is why I am thrilled to begin with extraordinary news.

If we raise a combined \$2 million through Annual Campaign gifts, designated gifts, and grants, the Bar Yadin Family Foundation will establish a \$1 million endowment in our Foundation to support San Antonio Jewish communal programming through Federation. Thank you Reuben, and your family, for your generosity and commitment to our community.

We are also launching the Gimel Society. Members make a three-year commitment, increasing their gift by 3 percent each year. You may make your Annual Campaign pledge, your designated gift, or both as Gimel Society commitments—turning tonight's decision into three years of sustained impact. Please join me in being a Gimel Society member.

You were given a pledge card in your envelope at registration.

First, please make your gift to the Annual Campaign. This is the investment that sustains Federation's broad mission to strengthen and protect Jewish life in San Antonio. Think of it like your local fire station – it is there and ready to go when there is a fire. We don't build it after the fire has already started.

Second, please consider our security needs. We urgently need an additional gift to the Designated Security Fund.

Who would have imagined that Jews in the United States of America would feel unsafe simply because we gather, worship, learn, and celebrate openly? But we do—and we must respond. Our security is a perfect example of what your Federation does: we identify a need affecting the entire Jewish community, bring the right partners together, and build a coordinated solution.

Our goal is to raise \$500,000 annually for the next three years to strengthen security across our Campus and our Community. This investment will increase security personnel,



maintain our connection to the Secure Community Network (SCN), and establish a full-time, staffed security desk at the front Campus entrance.

The need is here and now.

Without security, Jewish joy cannot flourish. Everyone who walks through our doors must feel safe.

So tonight, I am asking you to take three steps:

Make the most meaningful Annual Campaign gift you can.

Add a separate gift to the Designated Security Fund – or one of the other two important investments – fighting antisemitism and youth programs.

And make one or both gifts a three-year Gimel Society commitment.

If you have already made your Annual Campaign pledge, thank you. You can still extend it through Gimel and make an additional commitment to security.

Every qualifying gift moves us closer to unlocking the \$1 million endowment.

Please complete your card now and give the envelope to a Federation staff member.

Bold communities are not built by spectators.

Tonight, the need is urgent, the opportunity is extraordinary, and the responsibility belongs to all of us.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for investing in a stronger, safer, and more vibrant Jewish San Antonio.

And thank you again to Frost Bank, our presenting sponsor.